



Minutes
King County Rural Forest Commission
January 11, 2006
Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Alex Kamola, Lee Witter Kahn, Jim Franzel, Doug McClelland, Ole Una, Leonard Guss, Julie Stangell and Doug Schindler

Commissioners absent: Jean Bouffard and Dennis Dart

Exofficio member present: None

Exofficio members absent: Amy Grotta, Randy Sandin and Mike Reed

Staff: Kathy Creahan, Kristi McClelland, Linda Vane

Guests: Tom Hanson, International Forestry Consultants, for Dennis Dart and Jeff McMorris, King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert's office.

Alex Kamola called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Summary

Action Items:

1. Julie Stangell will incorporate the commission's comments into the Forest Certification information sheet.
2. Linda Vane will organize the flip chart notes and email them to the commissioners for review and comment. The goal is have a draft list of objectives and action items for consideration at the March 8 meeting.

Motions:

Motion 1-0106 "To adopt the November 9, 2005 minutes with the changes that have been mentioned." Ole asked that the minutes be amended to say that he asked Chip Nevins during the Cascade Land Conservancy presentation if landowners would be able to set up gravel mines on land after development rights had been purchased and that Chip said they would not. Jim Franzel provided a correction to the effect that the entire Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest has twenty-six campgrounds and five of these are in the Snoqualmie Ranger District. The motion was passed unanimously.

Motion 2-0106 "To accept the nominations for chair and vice chair by acclamation." The motion was passed unanimously. Alex Kamola will serve as Chair and Julie Stangell will serve as Vice Chair in 2006.

Elections

Alex Kamola was elected Chair and Julie Stangell was elected Vice Chair of the Rural Forest Commission for 2006.

Chair Report

In looking ahead to defining the RFC's goals for 2006, Alex commented that there is a lot that needs to be done in King County, especially for small forest landowners in regard to their management practices. Alex recently received notice of a grant for the Olympic Peninsula Small Forest Landowner Study, which would assist forest landowners in Jefferson and Clallam counties to manage clusters of small holdings collectively. The grant is headed by the NW Cooperative Development Center [<http://www.nwcdc.coop>], which has seen the same problem that we see, *i.e.*, urban people moving to the country and buying acreage without having the expertise to manage the forests they have inherited. The NWCDC is looking at ways to develop a sort of a cooperative forestry to address these issues.

Staff Reports

2006 Budget. Kathy Creahan reported that the Forestry Program budget for 2006 provides for the same staffing levels as 2005. It provides for two foresters, who will devote roughly 80% to 95% of their time to direct assistance to small forest landowners and the balance to assisting in the management of forestlands owned by King County. A project manager position serves as Urban Forestry Program lead, staff support to the RFC and administrator of two new forestry grants. A supervisor's time is split among the Forestry, Agriculture and current use taxation programs. King County also funds the WSU Extension forester position. In addition to the staff we have federal funding under Title III of the Secure Rural Schools Act to fund a youth forestry education grant program and a 'Firewise' community fire safety planning initiative, respectively. The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (PL 106-393) provides payments to counties that have been affected in recent years by decline in revenue from timber harvest on federal land. These revenues have historically been shared with counties. An additional new grant program will use King County funds to make small grants available for forestry-related economic development projects.

In response to a question from Doug S, Kathy said that the County allocated about \$50,000 to projects on federal land under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools that will be awarded through a separate grant program administered by the USDA Forest Service.

Forestry Program Grants. Linda Vane

Linda provided additional information on the two new forestry grant programs being offered by the County. The first of these was the Community Forestry grant program, which is intended to support rural economic development projects such as cooperative efforts among small forest landowners doing a joint harvest, technical assistance and forest products development. Those eligible would include small forest landowners, businesses, tribes, educational institutions or non-profit organizations. Non-tribal governments are not eligible.

Youth in forestry grants will be available for projects in both urban and rural areas. The purpose of the grants is to get kids educated about forestry, provide job skills and provide broader knowledge in the community about forest and forestry. The program will provide a both technical and financial assistance if needed.

Julie asked how these grants will be made available. Linda responded that a Request for Proposals will be announced this spring. The County has a large mailing list that will receive the announcement, including the members of the RFC. Linda asked for the RFC members' assistance in spreading the word about the grants when the announcements are made. Alex asked how the grants are reviewed and Linda answered that the process involves scoring of the grant applications by a panel of reviewers made up of volunteers from the community and county staff. The highest scoring applications are reviewed by a panel including County managers. Grants will be awarded this year, but we expect that most projects will be completed in 2007. Alex recommended that the projects selected be those that will help address systemic problems.

Small Farm Expo. For the first time the Small Farm Expo will include activities related to forestry. The Expo is sponsored by WSU Extension in King and Pierce counties and will be held on Saturday, March 18 at the Enumclaw Fairgrounds. The event will feature a mobile sawmill demonstration, a community fire planning workshop and an agroforestry workshop. More information will be available on the web site at:
<http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/wsucce/FarmExpo/Index.htm>.

Rural Economic Strategy Update. The Office of Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED) has released its *King County Rural Economic Strategy*. Copies of the report were distributed by email to the RFC members. The report and its appendix are also available on the web site at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/exec/bred/business/Projects/Rural.htm>. The report is a compilation of input received from the public and from advisory groups, including the Rural Forest Commission. Project lead Julia Larson and the BRED Office have asked the RFC to propose projects for which she and her colleagues could act as facilitators or technical advisors.

Ole asked if the term "rural" used in the title applies to properties within the Forest Production District. Kathy said yes, in this case the term "rural" means those areas that are not urban. Alex commented that the forestry section a list of available contractors or list of opportunities in forestry would be a useful addition to the report. Len said that there is no forest industry left in King County other than small crafts and small mobile sawmill operations. There is no longer infrastructure for large scale wood manufacturing such as veneer mills, pulp mills or chip mills. Ole said that forestry is a business that requires economies of scale and it is very difficult to make any money from milling small amounts of wood for custom projects. Alex said he has observed a disconnect between the harvest plans that small forest landowners write and the landowners' actual ability to harvest and sell timber. Alex added that there are ways to make the forest industry viable in King County so these small scale harvests could be marketed. Kristi

said that small forest landowners in the Tolt River Highlands banded together to complete a thinning to improve forest health and made a profit. In regard to large operations, Julie explained that although King County is missing the large scale wood manufacturing, we still have large scale tree growing and harvest such as Hancock Timber. There are still large lumber mills in Tacoma and Everett that can handle the large harvests.

Doug S. said one of the critical factors may be to retain enough of a land base in forestry so that the window is left open to smaller commercial forest operations even though we may have lost the large forest manufacturing. Retention of forestlands should be a focus of King County's efforts.

Work Group Reports

CAO Implementation - Forestry. Kristi McClelland reported that a public rule concerning Wildfire Risk Reduction Best Management Practices is currently under public review through the Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) [http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/pub_rule/]. The proposed rule stemmed from a provision in the new Critical Areas Ordinance that provided for developing best management practices (BMPs) for protecting homes in the event of wildfire. On-line there are a new pamphlet entitled "Fire Safety Tips for Rural Homeowners" and a free on-line permit related to the things one can do in the area immediately surrounding a home [<http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/permits/firehazard/>]. Generally speaking, a permit is required if one needs to alter native vegetation to establish a defensible space around the home. Altering non-native vegetation does not require a permit.

Kristi explained that to do things farther into the forest and away from the home, it becomes more complicated. A commercial harvest is regulated under State Forest Practices while a harvest on the home site needs a DDES permit. DDES now requires that any cutting of timber have DDES review and a permit. The Forestry Program has proposed to DDES that thinning for forest health should not trigger the moratorium, even if the thinning is done on the homesite. As it stands now, landowners must have a Forest Stewardship Plan [<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/forestry/Forestry-Plan.htm>] and delineate a homesite that is excluded from the plan. The operation can only be done on the forest portion of the property, not on the homesite. This prevents people from thinning on their homesite unless they get an expensive Conversion Option Harvest Plan. At present, this is the most difficult issue in implementing a community fire plan. The change proposed by the Forestry staff would exempt the home site from the moratorium to make it easier to thin for forest health or fuels reduction.

Lee asked if the removal of a tree at risk of falling requires a permit. Kristi said that if a tree is within the building envelope it requires DDES review and usually a permit. In most cases a home site is already cleared to the maximum degree so any additional clearing is not allowed without DDES review.

Forest Certification Information Sheet. Julie Stangell presented a rough draft of a question and answer sheet concerning forest certification. At the request of the County Executive last year, the RFC evaluated the possibility of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification of forestlands owned by King County. The RFC recommended against pursuing certification. The proposed information sheet will be a concise summary of the purposes of certification, the major certification programs and the steps in evaluating whether to pursue certification. The intended audience is decision-makers at the County level.

Julia asked the RFC members to comment on the draft. Len suggested that document explain the purposes of certification. In his view, it is to provide a paper trail from the point of harvest to the point of sale of manufactured products. Doug S. said it should be made clear how little county-owned land is in forestry; only 3,000 of more than 20,000 acres. Moreover, forestlands are often purchased by the County for ecological benefits rather than their productivity as working forests so the value of the timber is very low. Doug S. suggested that the document provide alternatives to certification that could help the County achieve their forest management goals.

Alex said the term “sustainable” should be defined as it is not clear what forestry practices would not be sustainable. Len also commented that the word “sustainable” can be misleading, because it is not necessarily good to sustain some types of stands in their present state. For example, an unhealthy alder or maple stand is not something that one wants to sustain.

Jim F. said that an executive summary could be provided if the information sheet becomes too long. Tom Hanson offered to share a PowerPoint presentation that he developed for a group of clients. Tom said that among his forestry consulting firm’s clients, there are three small tree farms certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). His company has not done a FSC certified harvest yet, but his understanding is that the costs and requirements of certification through SFI and FSC are very similar for small landowners.

Action. Julie will take the comments of the group and provide a revised draft.

RFC history and 2005 accomplishments

Linda Vane, King County Forestry Program

As an introduction to the brainstorming session to follow, Linda provided a brief history of the Forestry Program, which was established by the King County Council following the recommendation of the 1996 *Farm and Forest Report*. Linda distributed tabular summary of the objectives and accomplishments of the Rural Forest Commission from 2001 through 2005. In the early years the RFC advised the County on the current use taxation programs and dealt with issues concerning establishing markets for rural forest products, forest certification and advocacy among other topics. Many of these topics are still among the issues the RFC deals with today.

The role of the RFC is established in county code and includes:

- Provide direction on implementing the forest strategies identified in the Farm and Forest Report;
- Advise the County on proposed policies, programs, actions or legislation affecting rural forests or the practice of forestry;
- Identify additional strategies to conserve rural forest lands and promote the business of forestry in the rural area; and
- Address special rural forest issues as directed by the King County Executive or Council.

Group Discussion to identify RFC Goals for 2006

The RFC members brainstormed objectives and actions to serve as the foundation for the RFC activities in the coming year. The ideas generated included areas of interest such as: support economic development related to forests and forestry, increase and formalize advocacy from RFC to the County Council and Executive, educate other decision makers, raise awareness of forestry in King County through outreach and education, create alliances among RFC and other agencies/interests, continue to advise on County ordinances and policies, provide input on management plans for County owned forests and ensure that the county provides enough staffing resources to continue technical assistance to small forest landowners.

Action. Linda will organize the flip chart notes and email them to the commissioners for review and comment. The goal is have a draft list of objectives and action items for consideration at the March 8 meeting.

Suggestions for future agendas

- Federal Reauthorization of PL106-393, Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2003 and the importance of the funding to King County.
- How the Transfer of Development Rights Program works.
- Continue work on RFC Goals (next meeting).

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting

The next regularly scheduled meeting is March 8, 2006, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Preston.

Staff Liaison:

Linda Vane, Forestry Program

206-296-8042 or linda.vane@metrokc.gov